

The Whirlpool of Dependent Origination

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In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhādāsa gave regular lectures during the monthly international retreats held at Suan Mokkh and then Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage. Usually, Ajahn spoke in Thai and Santikaro Bhikkhu interpreted into English live. Audio recordings are now available from www.suanmokkh.org and www.bia.or.th. The following is a transcription generously made by a Dhamma volunteer. If you noticed possible improvements to the text and would like to contribute, please kindly contact the volunteer and the Buddhādāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok (suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com).

Yesterday we gave an introductory talk about Dhamma in general. We spoke of many general aspects of Dhamma. Today we will speak about the Dhamma which is the heart of Buddhism in particular.

We spoke of how Dhamma includes everything and how everything is Dhamma without any exception. Now we'd like to go deeper into the Dhamma, especially the Dhamma that is named *idappaccayatā-paṭiccasamuppādo* or a little more short *patitchasamupabat* [Thai] or *paṭiccasamuppāda* [Pāli] which is the heart of Buddhism. This is the natural principle which governs and controls everything, at least all of the things which are *saṅkhāra* that is all the conditioned compounded things – the things which are *saṅkhata* (conditioned, compounded, and concocted).

If you understand this subject of *paticcasamuppāda*, then you will understand the heart of Buddhism because this is exactly the thing that the Buddha was enlightened to. The Buddha's enlightenment was all about *paticcasamuppāda*.

This subject is easier to understand if we divide everything into two categories. All things can fall into one of two categories. There is the category of *saṅkhata* (excuse us for using the Pāli words but it's easier). *Saṅkhata* are the things which are compounded by causes and conditions, the things which are

concocted through causes and conditions. Then the other category is *asaṅkhata*, which means that they are not compounded by causes and conditions.

All the things which we call ‘problems’ are within the category of *saṅkhata* – compounded and concocted things. You will never find a problem in the *asaṅkhata* – the uncompounded category. Thus the subject of *paticcasamuppāda* is that of the *saṅkhata*, the compounded concocted things.

There is an ancient metaphor which expresses this – the metaphor of the *vaṭṭa*. *Vaṭṭa* is a cycle or something that spins round and round and round. Especially in India, they speak of the *vaṭṭa saṃsāra* (‘the spinning around of *saṃsāra*,’ ‘the whirlpool of *saṃsāra*’). *Vaṭṭa* is the metaphor or symbol for the concocted compounded things which spin around, cycling around like a whirlpool all the time.

The meaning of this metaphor is that we fall into the whirlpool, we get sucked up into the whirlpool and trapped within it so we can’t get out. Once we’re caught in the whirlpool, we can’t get out and so we drown, and we drown into the whirlpool over and over again. Because we can’t get out so we continually are drown in it. This is the meaning of the *vaṭṭa saṃsāra* – the cycles or the whirlpool of *saṃsāra*. It sucks us in and we’re trapped so that we drown over and over again.

An easy and obvious example of this is how we get trapped into the whirlpool of positive & negative, spinning around from positive to negative to positive to negative over and over again without getting free, even till the last day of our lives.

If we put it in simple terms which a child can understand, we call it ‘being trapped into the whirlpool of gladness & sadness.’ Then there are the traditional words in this part of the world that speak of the whirlpool of birth and death – the cycles of being born and dying, and then being reborn and dying again – the cycle of birth and death over and over again. This is another way of speaking about the whirlpool.

But the *vaṭṭa* which is more subtle and profound, the *vaṭṭa* which is true on a more subtle and deep level, is the *vaṭṭa* that has just three elements. It begins with desire, some kind of wanting and desiring, and then we act, there is action, then there are the fruits, the results of the actions; and then another desire, and another action, and then the fruits of those actions; and then more desire, then

actions based on the desire, and then more results of those actions – desire and action and fruits of actions and desire and it spins around and around like this.

In one day of our life, how many times do we desire? How many desires happen in one day? With each desire we act to satisfy the desire and then we get or we don't get, there are some results of that action. How many times are we desiring? How many times are we acting? What are the different results of all these actions? You can see how this whirlpool of saṃsāra of desire, action, and reaction spins around many times even in one day of our life.

These three conditions or modes are the symptoms or modes of what we call *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination). It happens over and over again and these cycles of dependent origination are spinning around many times each day. So we need to become very familiar with these cycles as they happen each day of our lives. We need to get familiar with them, know them, and understand them intimately.

All the problems which we face each day of our lives are just symptoms of these cycles of dependent origination. The problems of our health, families, economics, work, and all the ordinary gaining and losing, winning and losing of ordinary life, all these are modes or examples of the spinning around of vaṭṭa-saṃsāra, of dependent origination.

Our minds are imprisoned in this whirlpool of dependent origination. They're trapped and they can't get out so they just keep spinning around and around. If the mind get free of this prison the mind can get out of this whirlpool, that is what we call *vimutti* (salvation, liberation). When the mind can get free of this constant spinning around, that is the meaning of 'spiritual salvation.'

Other religions may explain salvation in different ways. They may have a different style of speaking or may use different metaphors. But in Buddhism, this is how we speak about salvation, that the mind is trapped in this whirlpool of dependent origination. It keeps spinning around in this whirlpool until one day it finds a way to get free, it gets outside of and free of all this spinning around. This is how we explain salvation in Buddhism.

Salvation is to get free of the bars and the cage of these cycles of dependent origination. When one gets totally free of that, in Buddhism it's called 'to realize Nibbāna.' Other religions may talk about it differently. Christianity might call it 'to dwell in the Kingdom of God,' or the Hindus might call it

‘being united with the eternal Self.’ But in practice, the meaning is the same – to escape from the cycles of spinning around of dependent origination.

If we want to explain it in a way that a child can understand, then we talk about getting free of the circle that makes us laugh and cry. There is this circle that is making us either laugh or cry all the time one after the other. Salvation is to get free of that circle of needing to laugh and cry.

The way of speaking about this for adults is to say, to get out of all problems, to get free of all problems. This means both the kind of theoretical problems or questions – the theoretical questions that trouble us – as well as the practical problems of daily life which we need to solve. To get free of all these is the meaning of salvation.

Please ask yourself very honestly whether you have these kinds of problems. In your life do you have this kind of problems? Does your mind spin around with these questions, issues, and difficulties? In your life, are you trapped still, within the cycles of dependent origination? Ask yourselves why it is that you must go there and come here. Why is it that you have to study this and study that? Is it because you are imprisoned behind the bars of dependent origination?

When the mind is trapped in the cage of dependent origination, then it is selfish. Whenever the mind is in this cage, then it will be thinking and acting selfishly. To get free of this cage of dependent origination is to overcome selfishness.

Nowadays the entire world is under the power of dependent origination. The whole world is engaged in this stream, in this whirlpool, in this spinning around of paṭiccasamuppāda. So it’s a world that is totally under the power of selfishness.

So the results that necessarily follow from all that selfishness are all the crises which trouble us in this modern world, so that it’s impossible to find any peace or happiness in this world.

We can say, in a way, that we don’t have to fear that anyone will contradict us or disagree that everyone in the world is selfish. Everyone in the world is selfish, from the great powers of the world to the little countries, they are all selfish – the developed countries are selfish, the developing and the underdeveloped countries are selfish; the employers are selfish and the

employees are selfish; the buyers are selfish and the sellers are selfish; the merchants are selfish and the consumers are selfish. Everyone in this world is selfish. Everyone is under the power of this dependent origination. Everyone is trapped in this cage, in this whirlpool.

The political problems of this world are the selfish matters of selfish people. The economic problems are the selfish problems of selfish people. The social problems are the selfish matters of selfish people. The whole world is having to deal with this problem of selfishness. Everyone in this world is creating and having to suffer from this problem of selfishness.

The political parties are unable to solve any of the world's problems because they are stuck in selfishness. Stuck in this selfishness, there is no peace within the political parties – so how can they ever work for peace in this world? The political parties don't understand dependent origination, and so they don't have the power or ability to control dependent origination. So our politicians and the parties are just spinning around over and over again in this selfishness of dependent origination. So there is no chance that we can depend on these politicians to bring peace to the world.

The craftiness that we see so evident in politicians, economists, businessmen, and everyone else comes from selfishness. This selfishness comes from not understanding the spinning around of dependent origination. When we don't understand dependent origination, then we are selfish. All the cunningness and trickiness that mark human relationships nowadays are a result of that.

The problem of selfishness arises because of the thing that we call 'self.' Because we attach to this thing called 'self' or 'ego,' then there is the problem of selfishness. If human beings understood dependent origination then they would see the futility of attaching to this thing called 'self' and then there would be no selfishness. Instead of selfishness there would be correctness. People would just do what needed to be done. They would be honest, just, straightforward, and pure, and then there wouldn't be any more problems.

Now we'll take a look at dependent origination itself. We'll focus our attention especially on this matter of paticcasamuppāda itself.

You can already understand from the word 'depending' what we're talking about. Depending on this thing, a new thing happens, and depending on that thing another thing happens, and depending on that thing another thing happens,

and on and on and on, depending on things new things keep happening. This dependent arising or happening or origination of new things which goes on and on and on is what we mean by ‘dependent origination.’

All of our problems are like this. Our health problems, economic problems, family problems, social problems – all of these problems are because we don’t understand and are unable to control dependent origination. All of these problems are just this depending on things and new things happening and then it goes on like that continuously. Whether its health problems or family problems, they happen dependent on other things and this process just goes on and on. Because we don’t understand this dependent origination, we can’t control any of these situations, and so there arises selfishness and *dukkha*. All these problems are painful for us because we don’t understand dependent origination.

So you can see for yourself where dependent origination happens. Where is dependent origination happening? It’s happening in each person every day. In our ordinary lives, in every one of us, we can find this dependent origination spinning and spinning around – these problems arising dependent on other things over and over again. But because we don’t see it, we don’t understand it, it keeps happening. We can’t control it because we don’t understand it, so it keeps happening within each of us.

In just one person or one individual, we can see all the symptoms of dependent origination. In these bodies, there are all the atoms which join together to form molecules which then make up the elements which then combine to form organs, and all of these collected organs and parts make up the body. Within each person we can see the symptoms of dependent origination. Dependent on things new things keep happening and that process goes on endlessly and constantly.

All of these can be seen within us. So we should look within and look very carefully until we can see all these truths and all these facts of dependent origination, so that we can see it clearly and understand how it happens. You don’t have to go looking for it outside somewhere, just look inside and you will meet dependent origination.

Or if we look outside of ourselves, we can find many external manifestations and symptoms of dependent origination. Sometimes we depend on material things, sometimes we depend on other people, and sometimes we depend on events and experiences. All the time, we are depending on other

things and those things depend on further things. So this basic principle of reality of things depending on things – things happening because of other things – this goes on and on. This is dependent origination outside of ourselves, external of ourselves.

And each problem that happens is associated with other problems. Each problem is connected to other problems, so in the end all the problems connect-up and depend on each other. All the problems in the world are interrelated and interdependent. This is the dependent origination of problems in the world.

Nowadays education is highly developed and we have very progressive education. Even so, our wonderful education, our degrees and everything cannot solve the problems of dependent origination. In spite of our highly advanced education which we like to call highly developed, it's unable to solve the problems of the world. We've got this education which produces science and technology, we've got all this high and advanced technology, but nonetheless it can't deal with the problems of selfishness, with the spinning around of dependent origination. So the technology doesn't solve any of the problems and sometimes it just causes new ones. Even religion which is supposed to deal with these problems directly, because of our advanced education and all our science and all our technology, religion is unable to deal with the problems of selfishness because education, science, and technology now serve the selfishness. Instead of being used to end the selfishness, education, science, and technology increase the selfishness. So religion alone is not able to solve the problem either. Originally, it was supposed to, but now it doesn't have much of a chance. So the selfishness just grows and grows through this process, these constant cycles of dependent origination.

And we've got quite complex and highly developed philosophical systems. There are all kinds of philosophies in the world but they can't solve this problem. All this thinking and speculation of philosophy can't solve the problems because it never deals with reality. Philosophy doesn't deal with the way things are, they just deal with our thoughts and speculations about things. So all the wonderful philosophies we've got, can't solve any of the problems of selfishness. Our material development can't solve these problems, the philosophies and philosophical systems can't solve them, so we remain trapped in the dependent origination of selfishness.

Why do the problems in the world keep getting worse? Why does pollution in the world keep growing and growing? Why is there increasing crime? Why are there more murders and rapes and things like that? Why is there more and more drug addiction in all the countries of the world? And why are there more and more of these strange diseases that we can't do anything about? Why are all of these things happening? They are happening because we don't understand the causes of the problem. We don't understand that the cause of all these problems is in dependent origination.

The root or fundamental cause of these problems is the fact that we don't know dependent origination. Our ignorance about dependent origination is the basic cause of all these problems. Because of this not-knowing, this lack of understanding of dependent origination, the defilements – our greed, hatred, anger, and selfishness – can lead us around by the nose. We're led everywhere by this selfishness. So we live in a way that just keeps creating more and more problems. The cause of this all is dependent origination, especially the fact that we don't know or understand dependent origination.

And what's rather pathetic is that when you have some understanding of dependent origination, when you know how it works at least a little bit, then you go and use that knowledge in a cunning way. We use this knowledge of dependent origination we have in order to trick or take advantage of other people. This knowledge isn't used as wisdom, but as a cunning way to get benefits from other people.

We're constantly deceiving ourselves. We see that something is correct, that it's the right thing to do, but it has no benefit for us. We don't get anything out of it so we don't do it. There is something else that we know is incorrect and that it's not right, but we get something out of it, there's some pay-off or benefit out of it so we do it. We keep deceiving ourselves and we keep acting according to selfishness instead of according to what is correct or according to Dhamma. So how could it be otherwise that our world is full of problems – our families, societies, the environment, and the whole world is full of problems when everyone is behaving in this way?

We are not honest or faithful to correctness or to truth. We're not faithful to the truth but we are only faithful to our own advantage, our own interests, and benefits. We don't care about what is right or what is true; we only care about the pay-off that we get from something personally. And so we live in a world

full of problems where truth and correctness don't really matter anymore. The only thing that matters is people's personal benefits and advantages. So it's a world of competition, of people struggling and fighting against each other. Not just between countries but even in families, even husbands and wives are fighting each other because of this selfishness.

Because we're not faithful to what is correct, we don't have any ability to understand dependent origination. We are not faithful to the truth so how can we ever see the truth? Not seeing dependent origination, we don't understand the original cause of all our problems, so we don't solve problems by eliminating the cause. Instead, we only deal with the effects and results, meaning our own personal benefits and advantages. Because of this lack of faith and sincerity, then we don't have any ability to solve any of the problems. We don't know what to do about *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

There is an old saying, we don't know whether it came from Europe, Asia, or the Middle-East, but it's correct wherever it comes from. The saying goes – “If one solves the problem at the cause, at the origin, then one is a lion cub. If you solve the problem at the end, at the results, then you are a puppy.” If you take a stick and poke a lion with the stick, the lion won't mess around with the stick but it will go at you. The lion isn't stupid – it knows what the problem is, so it deals with the problem. But a puppy is stupid, if you take a stick and hit it with the stick – the puppy is stupid and will just bite the stick. This will go on forever because the puppy doesn't know where the real cause [of problem] is. So if one deals with the real cause then one is a lion. But if one just messes around with the end of the stick, then one is a puppy.

If we don't understand dependent origination, there is no way we can solve the problem at its origin or at its source. So we will just keep fooling around with the results trying to readjust the results. That means that every time we try to solve the problems by rearranging the results, it would just create new problems and this will go on and on forever – an endless procession of the dependent origination of problems. If we want to really deal with problems, we need to go to their source, to their origin, and that means we need to understand dependent origination.

So this is the importance of dependent origination, *paṭiccasamuppāda*. It enables us to solve our problems at their origin. We can get to the source of the problems and end them there. This is the importance of *paṭiccasamuppāda* that

it can free us. If we understand it and practice accordingly, it can free us of all of our problems, from all dukkha. So we hope that you will be interested in dependent origination and that you will take it seriously enough befitting its great importance and value.

In the circle of Buddhists, we give a great deal of importance and honor to this matter of dependent origination. It's so important that we say that, '*dependent origination can turn an ordinary human being into a Buddha.*' We mean that prince Siddhartha who was just an ordinary person became a Buddha through knowing and fully realizing dependent origination. And with this knowledge, one is able to solve all the problems of the world. This is the importance that Buddhists give to dependent origination.

This thing they call 'enlightenment,' the enlightenment they like to talk about, is simply the realization of dependent origination. The Buddha realized dependent origination fully, one hundred percent, and that's what the great awakening or enlightenment was about. He had for a number of years investigated, searched, researched, and studied until he finally discovered this truth of dependent origination and that's how the enlightenment or great awakening of the Buddha came about, through the thorough realization of dependent origination.

When we're in a good mood and have some free time, we like to sing songs to ourselves. But when the Buddha is feeling well and has some free time, he sings dependent origination to himself. There is a place in the scriptures where the Buddha was alone sitting in the forest, and instead of singing songs like we do, he recited dependent origination. This is the difference between a Buddha and ordinary people like us.

And even after the enlightenment, the Buddha insisted and emphasized that

"Whoever sees dependent origination sees the Dhamma; and whoever sees the Dhamma sees me."

That means whoever really sees the Dhamma sees the Buddha. To just see the physical body, the skin, the hair, and all that doesn't mean seeing the Buddha. Seeing the Buddha simply means seeing dependent origination. By realizing for oneself the reality of *paticca-samuppāda*, one then meets the Buddha.

So we try our best to help you to understand and see for yourself the facts of dependent origination. We do what we can so that you can investigate this matter and see for yourself how it is. We try here to teach the Dhamma on the level of *paticcasamuppāda*, which means the very heart and essence of Dhamma, so that you can meet the Buddha for yourself. So that when you spend all this time in a Buddhist country, you can eventually meet the Buddha.

So we beg and implore you to study and profoundly investigate this matter of dependent origination. If you study it deeply and sincerely enough, then you will have the understanding which is of great practical benefit in your lives. You will have the kind of knowledge which will enable you to master and control the stream of dependent origination. Up until now, this stream just goes on and on keeping us trapped in all our problems and troubles. But when you see it for yourself the facts of dependent origination, this knowledge will enable you to regulate or control that stream and then you won't have any more problems. So we beg you to study this until you can use it for the best thing there is in your own lives.

In short, you will know the Dhamma, you'll know the essence, the heart of Dhamma, and you will meet the real Buddha for yourself. It won't be just a stone Buddha or a metal Buddha, it will be the real living Buddha if you meet and understand dependent origination.

The heart of the matter is that when you see dependent origination (you can call it *idappaccayatā* or 'conditionality' if you wish), then you will see nature and the law of nature. You will see all of nature and the law of nature in such a way that you don't see any self anywhere. You see it as all being void of self. When you see the world and all of nature in this way, then you don't concoct an ego or a self, so there is no selfishness. You don't act selfishly in a way that inflicts pain and suffering on yourself. You don't do anything selfish which takes advantage of or harms others. And so in this way, you don't have any problems and you don't make any problems for anyone else. This is the heart of the matter and importance of studying dependent origination. Then in this way we have got a whole another world. When we see the world in this way so that there is no selfishness, then it becomes the world of God – it becomes heaven, paradise, or whatever you want to call it because there is no more selfishness, and because we have seen dependent origination.

It's true that this matter is rather difficult. It's not such an easy thing to realize the truth of dependent origination. On the other hand, it's not impossible. It's within the limits and abilities of all of us to investigate and understand dependent origination. The reason it's difficult is because this kind of goes against our instinct. We have an instinct that is always pulling us in the direction of self. There is an instinct towards self that is very interested and concerned about one self. All the instincts will pull us in this direction so we need to retrain that instinct so it is no longer under the service of self, but it becomes more and more in the service of truth. If we retrain this instinct, then we can use it to discover that which has the most benefit for ourselves, namely to understand dependent origination.

Now dependent origination will reveal to us that everything just happens naturally and everything goes according to the law of nature. Nothing is really a self, or ego, or soul, everything is not-self. This is what dependent origination will reveal to us, that everything is not-self, that everything is void of self. But if you want to call it a 'self,' you can. Many people like to talk about 'self,' or 'soul,' or 'the higher self,' or whatever. If you want to talk that way, you can. But the important thing is not to let this talk about 'self' turn into selfishness. But if you really understand dependent origination, you won't have any more need for this business of self or soul – you won't need to talk about such things and you won't believe in them anymore because you'll see that everything is not-self and you will see that all that happens just naturally. If we are not careful, our ideas and thoughts about self would just get us into more trouble. But even if we can't totally get rid of self, if at this point we can't yet eliminate self totally, we can at least use our understanding of dependent origination to control that self so that it doesn't create any dukkha. So in short, really understanding dependent origination leads to the end of self. But as long as we have still got some 'self,' some 'ego,' or whatever you want to call it, understanding dependent origination will enable us to keep that from turning it into selfishness and creating dukkha.

Now we will start to investigate dependent origination in a way that even our children can understand. So please listen carefully so that you will be able to teach this to your children.

First of all, we have got eyes with which to see, ears for hearing, noses for smelling, tongues for tasting, skins for touching, and minds in order to think and

know and experience things. We have got these six things in order to know and experience the world around us – this is the first thing to know.

Now we will use the example of the eye to talk about how things happen. When the eye sees a form, there's some visual form out there, when the eye sees the form, the person who understands dependent origination will think only that the visual nervous system is experiencing some visual stimulus. That's all the person who understands dependent origination will think. But the person who doesn't understand dependent origination will think 'me' sees it and 'I' see it, it's 'me' that sees. This is the difference between knowing and not-knowing dependent origination. The person who doesn't know dependent origination is totally oblivious to how the nervous system works. But the person who understands it, recognizes that seeing something just means that the nervous system is functioning. The eye and the optic nerve and part of the brain are just functioning the way it is supposed to and that's all.

You can compare this for yourselves in order to see the difference clearly. Between the person who sees dependent origination – that it's just the eyes functioning in seeing a form just the nervous system working – and the person who doesn't see dependent origination who thinks that 'I' see it and its 'me' that sees. Between these two how is the difference? What are the reactions or effects of these two different ways of seeing? What would be the results of just seeing that 'Oh it's just the nervous system working' and what are the results of thinking that '*I* see'? If you see how the reactions differ and how the results are quite different, you will see that between these two ways of seeing there is a total difference. They are opposite, it's to go in opposite directions.

If it's just the eye seeing a form and just the nervous system functioning, then you can understand that there won't be any selfishness. No selfishness needs to come in if we understand that it's just the nervous system performing its natural function. But if it's 'I' see, I think you can understand how that will lead to selfishness. So it becomes the difference between seeing unselfishly and seeing selfishly, this is the difference. The importance of the difference should be clear to everyone.

If 'I' sees something, it's the ego seeing, then there will be wanting, desiring, wanting to collect it, and have it or keep it or become it or change it or something like this. So there will be all the complications and trouble of wanting, collecting, possessing, changing, struggling, and all that. But if it's just

the nervous system seeing, if it's merely the nervous system working properly and there is no 'I,' no 'ego' to see, then it's very simple and all we do is know what to do next. We know that the eye, the nervous system is functioning and we know what to do about it and that's all.

So the difference between seeing according to dependent origination and not seeing according to dependent origination should be fairly clear. Now if we investigate it further, when the physical eye sees the form, then there arises a thing called 'eye-consciousness' or the visual consciousness. Consciousness arises dependent on the eye and the form out there, or the ear and the sound. There is no such thing as eternal consciousness. It's not like consciousness is always there, but it dependently arises when the eye interacts with a form. Then when there are these three things – the eye, the form, and the visual consciousness, there is contact. The experience makes contact with the mind. This also happens through dependent origination.

Those who do not understand dependent origination do not see that consciousness arises dependent on the senses. So they think that consciousness is there all the time and that it's a one long continuous thing, and that this consciousness lasts forever and ever, and that it's some kind of eternal consciousness. But those who see dependent origination understand that consciousness just arises momentarily. When the eye sees a form, consciousness arises and then it passes away. When the ear hears a sound, consciousness arises momentarily, temporarily.

Consciousness is not something that was there from the start, but it arises only after there is the interaction between our nervous system and the world around us. Then consciousness arises momentarily.

Those who see things truly or according to truth see that when there is the eye, the form, and the visual consciousness, these three things come together or they communicate – the Pāli word is *saṅkhata*. They come together and they meet with each other. This means that there is contact, that the mind makes contact with the sense objects. This is another thing that is dependently originated. Contact isn't some permanent thing. It's just a temporary and momentary thing that happens when these three things come together when they communicate.

Then when there is contact, when there is momentary contact, dependent on contact there is *vedanā*. One has a kind of feeling or the experience has a feeling

quality to it of positive or negative. One who sees that this is just happening according to dependent origination sees that this vedanā isn't some self or soul, it's just a natural reaction to the sense experience and that there is no 'me' that feels or its not 'my' feeling or anything like that. It's just another momentary thing which arises and will pass away. It's not something to be taken as being 'me,' or self, or soul.

The person who doesn't understand dependent origination gets stupid at this point. When feeling arises, the one who doesn't know about dependent origination will foolishly grab on to that feeling as being 'me' or 'mine.' This person takes the vedanā very seriously as something really important and lasting. So they get all entangled with the vedanā and this turns into liking & disliking. They get concocted by the vedanā so there is this liking & disliking which then leads on to all kinds of problems. This is the danger of vedanā if one doesn't understand dependent origination, then one gets into trouble at this point. But the person who understands dependent origination sees that consciousness is not-self and it is not 'me.' And contact is neither self nor 'me.' So any pleasant or unpleasant feelings or any sensations that are experienced or that arise due to consciousness and contact, they can't be 'me' either. They are just natural reactions to contact and that it's just a natural experience. Seeing it in this way, one is not deceived by vedanā and one isn't tricked by it. Then one doesn't get caught up into liking & disliking. One just takes it as natural in response in an appropriate way without getting all lost in one's preferences and desires and all that.

The person who doesn't understand dependent origination, if a positive feeling arises they fall for it, they buy into it. They want to possess it, cherish it, and so on. If a negative feeling arises, they want to get rid of it, they want to kill it, destroy it, and annihilate it. So this way, what's called *taṇhā* (desire, craving) arises. Positive vedanā stirs up positive desires and negative vedanā stirs up negative desires. But the person who understands dependent origination sees things differently. If it's a positive feeling, 'Oh it's just a positive feeling,' if it's a negative feeling 'Oh it's just like that, it's just the way things happen. It's natural, it's just the way things go.' And so desire or craving doesn't get stirred up. There is no need to create, to manufacture desire or craving. This is the difference between knowing and not-knowing dependent origination regarding the vedanā.

So the foolish person ends up enslaved to the *vedanā*. All of you, are you enslaved to the *vedanā* or not? If one is the slave to the *vedanā*, then one is trapped and it would just bring on *dukkha* for one.

Everyone in the world must struggle morning, afternoon, and night because they are slaves to the *vedanā*.

So the danger of *vedanā* is that it stirs up self. Because we are stupid about these *vedanā*, because we don't understand them, we concoct and create self out of it. Because we don't understand the feelings, the *vedanā*, we fall for them and we become enslaved by them. Then in our enslavement, we create the self, the ego, the 'me,' the soul that is enslaved and trapped. This is the problem and the danger of the *vedanā*.

Vedanā leads to *taṇhā* (foolish desire). Any kind of stupid desire is called *taṇhā*. *Taṇhā* leads to or conditions the sense of self, thinking that it's 'me' that experiences; it's 'me' that wants and desires. This is called *upādāna* (attachment, clinging). This clinging to desire, to *vedanā* as being self or as being 'me' is called 'attachment,' *upādāna*.

This *upādāna*, clinging, towards self then gives rise to a strong feeling of being someone or something. We personify this self and we create an identity or personality around it. This is called *bhava* (existence) – it's the existence of self. Whether it happens in the womb or it happens outside the womb, it's the same. There is this existence of a personality, of a person, of an ego, and then this ripens and becomes mature until it's born as a full-blown ego. One has a full-blown ego which then behaves selfishly creating problems, creating *dukkha*. Because of the ignorance about how all these things work, then the feeling has stirred up desire and detachment, and then identification and personality. Then the ego is born and with it, selfishness and *dukkha*.

So when there is this illusive, delusive self, when there is this illusion of self, being a personality, this is called *bhava*. And then as it ripens, ages, and matures, then there is the thing what is called 'birth' – the ego is born – the 'I am' is born in the mind. This is called *jāti* (birth). This is the full-grown fully matured birth of ego. The self is now fully ripened and is born as self, as ego.

This birth of ego doesn't just happen once, it happens over and over again, many times in a day. The person who doesn't understand *patīcasamuppāda* can't understand how there is birth many times in one day. But anyone who

understands dependent origination will understand what it means to be born over and over again, what this birth of ego is all about. Now when ego is born, when this ‘me’ is born, then everything that it associates with is taken to be ‘mine.’ So birth is the birth of *attā* (‘self’ – in the full meaning of the word ‘self’). Then everything else is taken to be *attaniya* (things belonging to self, related and connected to self). So now everything has become a mess. There aren’t just natural things anymore – there is self and things that belong to self and all the complicated relationships and hassles and burdens and troubles of self and of-self, of *attā* and *attaniya*. So this is the *dukkha* – life has now been turned into *dukkha*, has become miserable because of all the self and of-self.

So things being this way, you ought to know how to control and how to manage the flow of *paticcasamuppāda* so that it doesn’t become trouble, it doesn’t make *dukkha* for you. The details on how to manage the stream of dependent origination will take a while to explain and we don’t have any more time today, so we’ll talk about it at a later day. For now, let’s wrap things up by saying that *dukkha* happens because we are ignorant of *paticcasamuppāda*. Because we don’t understand dependent origination, we suffer. On a later date, we will talk about what to do about that and how to manage the flow of dependent origination. But for now, the time is up and you have listened very carefully, we thank you for your attention and effort. We will continue again later.

Don’t forget, *walking without a walker*. Please have a nice peaceful walk back to the center, just walking, just the natural function of walking without the stupidity of a walker.

Doing without a doer is a lesson all the time. This is a lesson we can study every moment – *doing without a doer*.

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